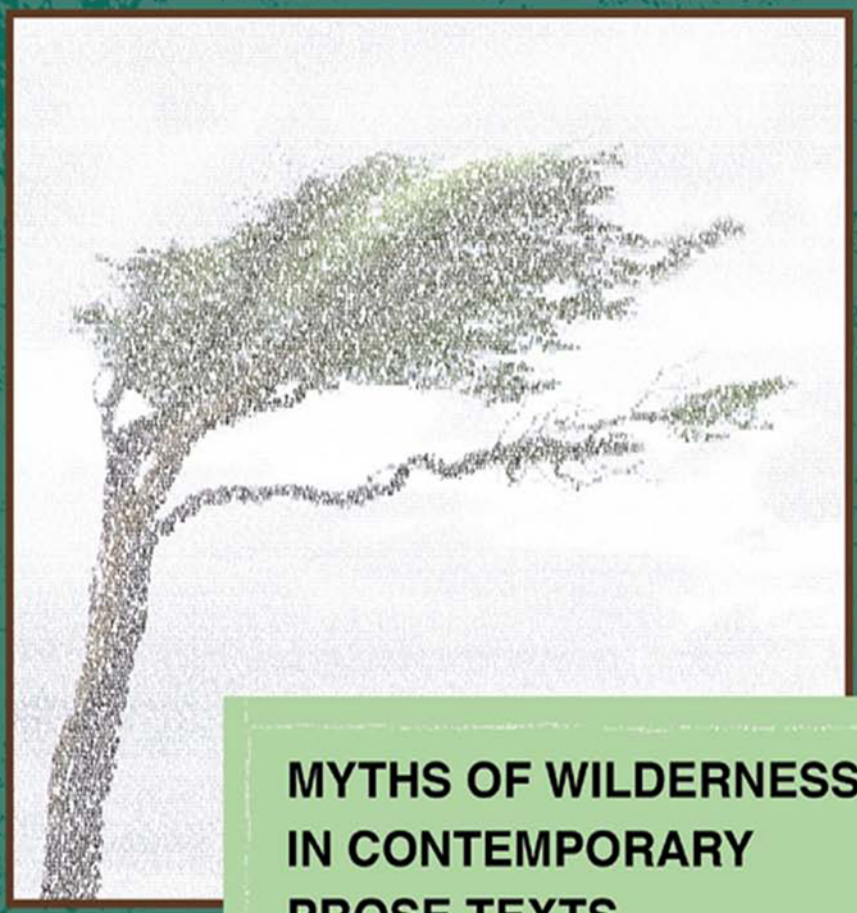
LITERATURES CULTURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT



MYTHS OF WILDERNESS IN CONTEMPORARY PROSE TEXTS

Environmental Postcolonialism in Australia and Canada

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Wilderness Values (II): Protection and Exploitation in Julia Leigh's *The Hunter*

Issues of environmental concern are deeply related to issues of environmental perception and representation. This becomes particularly astute in conjunction with texts with characteristics of the "utilizing the wilderness" type, as also explored in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I turn my attention to Julia Leigh's *The Hunter*. This novel engages with myths of wilderness by also positing the evasive figure of the thylacine/Tasmanian Tiger as a metaphor for wilderness.[1] Issues of survival, extinction, feminization, and othering are played out through this figure, with specific effects for the understanding of wilderness that informs the nature of the novel. In the scope of this project, *The Hunter* is read not only in terms of the utilizing the wilderness type—foregrounding issues of logging and conservation—but can also be productively read in terms of the "into the wilderness" type considering the figure of the hunter, and as "post-wilderness" writing given the ethical concerns the text explicitly and implicitly raises.

The Hunter was first published in 1999 as Leigh's first novel.[2] As the title suggests, the novel revolves around a hunter, a solitary man on a mission in Tasmania. The use of the present tense in the novel, which evokes a sense of immediacy (as also discussed in previous chapters), and references to particular technologies suggest that the events portrayed in the text thus can be seen as happening *now*, in the time frame that the reader is reading the text. This gives the callous destruction of the (paradoxically already extinct) species *Thylacinus cynocephalus* (aka the thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger) a further edge, placing the reader, to push this turn of phrase a little further, *on edge*.

Throughout the novel, the reader is only privy to the thoughts of one character, the hunter—which would, under normal circumstances, possibly lead to a heightened identification with this character—however, for a number of reasons I will outline in this chapter, this is not (necessarily) the case in *The Hunter*. One of the most obvious hindrances is this character's unethical actions: He kills what he must assume is the last thylacine at the close of the novel, ostensibly causing the extinction of this species. However, there is something unusual about this character beyond his actions, and I believe this lies in the narrative situation itself: While we might believe we are cognizant of his thoughts, we are often actually only given insight into those thoughts in which this character characterizes himself. Right up until the end, this character, whom the narrative refers to simply as M, appears to be telling *himself* what he thinks and who he is as much as he is telling the reader. This mode of storytelling wedges a distance between the reader and this character. He is not to be trusted, but this does not necessarily mean that the narration is unreliable: The reader may be inclined to want to trust M to be truthful and therefore also be inclined to identify with him. But, at the same time, we must remember that the narrator has given us no reason to do so: To the contrary, the use of the abbreviation M throughout the story underlines the fiction within the fiction, that is, that the name is a creation of a second degree. M, of course, could stand for anything: Man, Master, Metaphor, Metonym, Masculinity, Mercenary, Man-on-a-Mission, Murderer, and perhaps even Marsupial.

The effect the events may have on the reader must be seen not only as a result of the unsympathetic story and protagonist, but also as a function of the narrative perspective and tense. Therefore, when contemplating the events and plot of the novel, I believe it is important to remember that this is a doubly estranged man: A man estranged from himself, and estranged from the "world," in the wilderness. The narrative situation, therefore, seems to oscillate between figural, which would be the normal case of a narrative focusing on one character to this extent, and authorial, due to this emotional distance. This has vital repercussions for my analysis, and for my critique of other readings of the text.

On Track

We are first introduced to the main protagonist, an as-yet-unnamed male, on a plane in the middle of turbulence, jolting us as readers into

the world of the novel. After the plane lands, this character rents a 4WD utility vehicle and leaves the "Tiger Town" airport in a southwesterly direction. It is difficult to locate the location of the story with any final certainty. In "Back From the Dead," Leigh suggests she is referring to Launceston, although "Tiger Town" could also be Devenport; in either case, the direction of travel is toward the western part of Tasmania known for its wilderness (in the sense of "untrammeled nature").[3] We then follow this character through landscapes notably marked with signs of civilization: Kentucky Fried Chicken stores, paddocks with trees protected from cows, corner stores, and a number of creeks that are mentioned by name. M, as the protagonist "Martin David, Naturalist" (5 ff.) is referred to within the narrative, drives on until he reaches the house that will be his base for his excursions, "the last house at the end of the last road" (5).[4] This is the edge of civilization, and also the edge of wilderness, as is echoed in the description of the base as a transitional zone, a space that used to be a farm, but where weeds have now taken over. The presence of car wrecks and empty tin drums in the yard further emphasizes the disorder overtaking order, as does the chaos inside the house.

M is met by two children who appear to fend for themselves. According to the company that sent him to Tasmania, the mother was supposed to have been reliable, but the disorderly interior of the house causes M to feel uncomfortable. He has not met her by the time he is taken up onto the "steep dark escarpment which climbs to the Central Plateau" (5) by Jack Mindy, a local, and it is by talking to Jack that M learns of what has happened: Jarrah Armstrong, Lucy's husband and the children's father, has disappeared on the plateau while doing research. That a man, familiar with the territory, can disappear up on the plateau speaks for its wilderness qualities: it is an area that must be survived, so vast that it can swallow people. It is there, up on the plateau, that M must carry out his task: It is his job to retrieve the DNA material of the last thylacine for a biotech company, a task complicated somewhat by the extinction of this species in 1936. A sighting of the thylacine in the diegetic framework of the novel suggests that it is perhaps not extinct, which adds an ethical component to the way the text can be read.[5] This makes M's task either impossible, if the animal is indeed extinct, or at least tricky (not only as a mission, but also morally), if it is not extinct. M is a hunter, but he is also haunted by the myth of the creature he seeks: The thylacine, also known as the Tasmanian Tiger, is an animal of great symbolic purpose, particularly pertaining to wilderness in Tasmania, as I will explore in this chapter.

Attitudes toward the utilization of wilderness will be traced in the following chapter in conjunction with two groups of characters present in the novel. The Armstrong family, together with their visitors, form one group of locals whom I will identify as conservationists or hippies. The townspeople, whom I assume are farmers and loggers or similar, form the other group: Their resentment toward the hippies is particularly noticeable in their animosity toward M, whom they assume to be conservationist by association. Whereas my analysis of Hume's text in the previous chapter foregrounded the manner in which the tensions of "utilizing the wilderness" can be aesthetically coded, in this chapter I trace how the groups' attitudes toward each other, and as embodied in their respective attitudes toward the Tasmanian Tiger/thylacine, reveal the contradictions of wilderness myths. This analysis is thus thematically driven, although I will now first address the paratextual and narratological devices that frame this reading of Leigh's novel. I wish to stress that thematical preoccupations must be considered a function of their aesthetic presentation.

Framing the Text

As in previous chapters, I find it felicitous to examine the cover of the text, as well as the further paratext, in order to explicate not only how the text is marketed, but also how this may influence readings of the text. *The Hunter* has been published in several editions and by several publishers. The covers I discuss here generally place emphasis on the tiger/thylacine; however, one plays more directly with the idea of a man alone in nature. The Faber&Faber hardcover edition emphasizes the hunter figure, suggesting a reading along the lines of the into the wilderness type. It shows a man on a rocky outcrop alluding to Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (*Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*) through the use of color (very little) and the depiction of a male figure on rocks in wilderness. This cover references Romantic semiotics to emphasize the lonely figure of the hunter, augmented by the placement of the figure slightly off-center, a slight, maybe significant, difference from Friedrich's painting. This off-center placement might invite the viewer to see *with* the lonely figure, or, alternatively, emphasize the figure's liminality.

The remaining covers all depict the animal that is being hunted: The thylacine, or the Tasmanian Tiger. In this, the cover preempts the story, because in the written text, it is not immediately clear what it is exactly that M (the hunter) is hunting. The animal is depicted in a number of ways. Some have a blurry color image of a tiger (the Four

Walls Eight Windows hardcover and the Penguin 1999 paperback) and others have a black-and-white focused one (the Faber&Faber paperback and Four Walls Eight Windows paperback). All four reference particular "photographic discourses." The blurriness of the former two functions to associate the novel with the discourse surrounding the myth of the tiger: In a manner much like the Loch Ness Monster or the yeti, the tiger has a continuing presence that belies its existence, a myth that is perpetrated visually online, as well as in other fictional works (e.g., Margaret Mittelbach's *Carnivorous Nights: On the Trail of the Tasmanian Tiger*). The second type of image, through its reductive black-and-white color scheme, references museums and archival knowledge. This corresponds to the other way that the tiger continues to be present in contemporary life: As a symbol of extinction, much like the dodo. Unlike the color photos of the tiger, which are inevitably disputed but a central part of its myth, these photographs depict the thylacine, that is, the animal that once lived. The use of black and white alludes not only to age, but also to scientific discourses, or "book knowledge," referencing authority.

The cover of the 2001 Penguin paperback edition is perhaps the most intriguing, as it portrays what we might assume to be the tiger's natural habitat, a forest, in color, together with a black-and-white photographic insert of the tiger, jaws agape. The effect of the black-and-white insert is paradoxical: It underlines the connection of the tiger to its environment, indicating its presence in the forest. Simultaneously, however, the use of the thick black line around the photograph, together with the different color scheme, separates the tiger from its surroundings, wedging a passage of time between the two. The animal is both present and absent. The circle can also be read as the sight of a gun, suggesting "The Hunted" more than *The Hunter*, thus working to remove the tiger from its environment.

My reading was framed by the Faber&Faber paperback edition, and I have since also seen the Penguin 1999 paperback: What is interesting about both these editions is the (identical) blurb and the way it frames readings of the novel. This blurb includes a small excerpt from the novel itself, quoting directly from page 33, the first night M spends on the plateau, or scarp. Most notably, this passage shows the tiger feminized (through the use of the feminine personal pronoun) and that her actions are synchronized with M's own: While M is falling asleep, the tiger is awaking; whereas M is having his last thought, the tiger is having her first. The title of the novel is introduced and followed by a summary: "An unnamed man," so the blurb on the back cover reads, "M, arrives at a remote house on the fringe of a

vast wilderness and soon disappears into a world of silence and stillness. His one mission: to find the last thylacine, the fabled Tasmanian tiger. She is said to have passed into a myth but a sighting has been reported . . . " (back cover). This short summary provides a number of clues that were important to my own reading and consequent analysis, most prominently, of course, the direct reference to wilderness. This reference already does a lot to frame the novel as a wilderness narrative. This wilderness is qualified as vast, hence evoking the trope of the sublime and the discourse of survival, in particular through the phrase "world of silence and stillness," which couples the vastness of the wilderness with loneliness. The blurb thus not only frames the narrative as wilderness writing, but it also elucidates a number of qualities of this wilderness.

A second aspect of the blurb is the link between the wilderness and the animal. We not only have the last thylacine—a flesh and blood animal, its status marked as scientific or real by the Latinate name—but also "the fabled Tasmanian tiger"—the stuff that myths are made of. Its—or rather "her" as the tiger is consistently gendered—status as animal *and* as myth is reinforced by the statement "passed into myth but a sighting has been reported". The verb "passed" intimates that the animal's status as myth is irrevocable yet rests uneasily with the idea that this can only be complete with the death of the last animal. Finally, the juxtaposition of this description of the animal with wilderness here suggests a close association, suggesting the transfer of the symbolic content of one field onto the other, forging a link between the wilderness and the tiger, between the wilderness and the thylacine.

Reading the Text as Wilderness Writing

As indicated in my typology of wilderness writing, utilizing the wilderness writing is predicated on the assumption that wilderness exists. Unlike many other texts that I identify in the introduction as belonging to this category, and also unlike Mark Hume's *River of the Angry Moon*, Leigh's text is a novel, that is, a clearly fictionalized account of wilderness. Wilderness is present in *The Hunter* through multifacetted dualistic tensions that often reflect upon, and occasionally conflict with, each other. The many different types of wilderness in *The Hunter* correspond to the different types of use of the wilderness—as a construct against which civilization is constructed, as a resource for logging, as a resource for hunting (of course), and also as something valuable that must be protected. Despite the obvious

differences that emerge between the "hippie" and "logger" perspectives on wilderness, the moot point of these differences is the *type* of use, not use itself.

I read wilderness in *The Hunter* metonymically through, first, the plateau and the looming escarpment, off the edge of civilization, and, second, the thylacine/tiger. The plateau is manifested primarily in descriptions within the text and the behavior and stories of the protagonists of the novel. It is associated with a number of things that mark it as "other": It is dark, mysterious, looming, past the last house of the last road, ancient, confusing, devoid of humans and human sign systems, full of thick vegetation and small, and noisy animals, to name just a few attributes. The protagonists have a sense of awe for the plateau, particularly in light of Jarrah Armstrong's disappearance, which, in turn, supports the descriptive elements listed above: The plateau is vast and wild, and poses a threat to survival. It is, at the same time, a resource, and not only for the loggers, but also for the National Park Services.

The association of the tiger with wilderness is a little more complex. Both the tiger—the myth of the thylacine—and the thylacine itself are present in the novel, combining to form an intriguing logic of presence and absence, and of life and death. The ramifications of the presence of the thylacine are augmented by the inclusion of a deep ecologist viewpoint in addition to the conservationist, productionist, and late capitalist positions explicated through the various interests vested in the Tasmanian forest, and, metonymically, the Tasmanian Tiger: In this way, a straightforward approach to nature as the dualistic opposite of culture is questioned by my reading of the text.

Placing the Text

The constructions of space within the novel must be considered carefully in order to trace the way wilderness is constructed and problematized in *The Hunter*. My hypothesis rests on a number of assumptions, most notably expressed in the following phrase from the blurb of the book: The blurb suggests that it is silent and still, hardly because it is empty, but rather because it is uninhabited. The "silence and stillness" quoted in the blurb thus refer not to an actual quality of the area, but rather refers to the absence of human noises (cf. 33–34). Wilderness is clearly constructed in opposition to civilization: comparative rather than absolute.

The first description of the Armstrong house reads as follows: "A little bluestone house sits quietly on the edge of the rippling flats,

and rising beyond the house is the steep dark escarpment which climbs to the Central Plateau itself: the last house at the end of the last road" (5). The repetition of the superlative "last" in combination with "house" and "road" frames the house as situated on the edge of civilization. This description emphasizes not only the sheltering-function provided by houses, but also the access-function that roads provide. Roads are an organizational principle: They direct traffic and people; they are paths facilitating and regulating movement. And, as a construction that almost always involves federal-level or state-level organization in modern Western societies, roads can be seen as ordering principles, coming from an authority above, and instrumental to settlement. The description of roads lays bare the different qualities accorded to the different places in the text.

The sealed road is marked by repetition or, in other words, a continuation of sameness. It is this quality of monotony that allows thoughts to wander: On the road to the Armstrong's house for the first time, M "drives, turns smooth corners. He practices his story" (5). This contrasts dramatically to the difficulties of traversing the forest, where full attention is necessary in order to move, like the fire-trail that provides access to the bottom of the escarpment, which is make-shift at best (13). In the forest, M is "off the beaten track." Not only must he pay attention to his movements and the path he is taking, but the ground also cannot be trusted, as can be seen in the following reprimand to himself after his foot plunges into a foothole:

> Let this be a lesson, he thinks: the ground up here is waterlogged and riddled with potholes, holes beneath the spongy coral fern, hidden holes throughout the sphagnum . . . The ground you tread is only feeble ground and any minute it will be reclaimed. Tread carefully. He treads carefully. (31–32)

The space of the forest is thus not only beyond the order represented by the farms and roads surrounding it, but it is also entirely reversed by the chaotic indeterminacy of a ground that is ready to fall apart. Despite M's self-stylization as "natural man," a trait also persistent in Hume's account in *River of the Angry Moon*, he does not possess supernatural powers. Without the superficial order of roads, and, more potently, without the added order of names, even M can get lost (cf. 89). The restrictions of the satellite pictures he employs are shown when he studies "a new map, where bluffs and tiers and peaks have been scaled down to half their precious size and where a lack of detail leaves room for the sea-dragons beloved of ancient cartographers"

(156). The reference to gaps in maps also forges a link to the colonial project and colonial knowledge, as explored in more detail in the chapter on *Dirt Music*.

One of the central paradoxes in the way that the plateau in *The Hunter* is described as wilderness is that of perspective. In the novel, this is played out in M's need for perspective—including his ability to see—and his need for others to not have this perspective, for otherwise his task (to "harvest" the last thylacine) will be superfluous. If others can maneuver within the plateau as well as him, this would not only jeopardize his hunt by revealing his positions and his goal, but also likely render his task redundant should someone else discover the thylacine before he does. A way of overcoming this lack of perspective in the forest is provided in the novel by the satellite pictures. To draw on Paul Carter, "the 'closed' world of the forest and the 'open' environment of the plains [present] similar challenges, challenges defined by the newcomer's irremediable lack of commanding height" (284). Once M leaves the area of the detailed satellite photographs and maps, his advantage is minimized. As a number of skills, such as compass-reading, topographical analysis, and abstraction, are required for maps of any kind to be of use, in the end M's orientation is more dependent on his ability to maneuver at ground level than his abilities to transpose maps into terrain.

The plateau is furthermore characterized by its impermeability: M finds himself, for example, "side-stepping the low tea-tree and scorpia, or, where he has to, bending his arms at the elbow to screen his chest and face, then pushing through" (29–30). This description demonstrates a ground-level interaction with the environment, but is not necessarily indicative of a wilderness environment. In order to describe the wilderness, M requires a position of perspective over the area, which he acquires in the novel either by scaling trees or when he reaches sudden gaps in the vegetation, as suggested by phrases such as "on the far side of the rise[,] he gets his first view of the valley floor open and vast before him. It is immense" (30). Or, alternatively,

> when he pulls himself up between two stunted snow gums and finds himself on moderately flat ground he is surprised at how suddenly the track comes to an end. Looking around he sees how easy it would be to forget where the track drops off, and so he takes care to tag the area with bright orange strips of plastic. To make doubly sure, he unsheathes his knife and strikes two small blazes into each of the two gums he has just passed between, and a little further on, at regular intervals through the flat scrub, he arranges small cairns and turns down twigs. (28)

Here, M notes the immensity of the plateau and immediately commences changing it. While these marks are essentially trail-blazing, he also transforms his surroundings by incision and arrangement so that it better meets his purposes. He is in some respect de-wilderness-ing this small area, trying to impose some order onto the expansive wildness: Such activities stress rather than detract from the wilderness qualities of the region, however, as Jarrah Armstrong's disappearance overshadows M's presence on the plateau.

M's interaction with the environment shown in the quoted passage traces the incompatibilities of perspective and movement. Bushwalkers (or hikers) will recognize this. The logic of the map does not correspond to practices of moving through the environment: One involves an on-the-ground interaction with the body; the other, a perspective from above and abstraction. Ground-level interaction also clashes with another mechanism of understanding landscape, namely, the aesthetics of many visual art forms. As Rick van Noy argues in "Surveying the Sublime: Literary Cartographers and the Spirit of Place," the map and the sublime are the results of different levels of involvement in the landscape:

> If the map produces a static landscape that can be managed from above, the sublime produces an active, resistant space and promotes humility: the sublime space is larger than the writer though he or she is part of it. According to the aesthetic of the sublime, humans are not the masters of landscape but are included in the web of its mystery. Rather than produce knowledge, as the map does, the sublime beggars it. (201)

If the sublime entails wonder, godliness, awe, and a feeling that something is larger than oneself, a certain distance is necessary in order to recognize, or even have, these feelings. On the assumption that the wilderness is sublime, in order to survive the wilderness, these sublime qualities must be restricted to an external perspective: A long-lasting state of fear and wonder is in no way instrumental to survival. For this reason, the plateau is, and can only be, described in terms of the sublime from the "safe distance" of the Armstrong's residence, or, perhaps, on a reflective occasion perched on a tree.[6] Wilderness is at its most wondrous from afar; up close, it poses challenges and threats.

Thylacinus cynocephalus aka the Thylacine or the Tasmanian Tiger

On September 7, 1936, the last known specimen of the species *Thylacinus cynocephalus* died in the Hobart Zoo. There is reason

to assume that the thylacine's habitat once spread over the entire Australian continent, including its most recent domain on the island of Tasmania, given documentation in the form of Aboriginal cave rock paintings that reaches as far as Western Australia (cf. also Flannery 276). More recently, the thylacine's habitat was restricted to the island of Tasmania to the south of the Australian mainland, generally attributed to the introduction of the dingo to the Australian mainland. In 1804, after European settlement was begun on the island of Tasmania, some escaped convicts reported that they had seen a "large tyger" in the bush: Following this (grossly misinformed) designation, the thylacine received its more popular name, the Tasmanian Tiger, and was also given the destructive association with the large carnivorous cat that roams Asia.[7] This association through the misnaming—the thylacine is actually a marsupial and not a member of Carnivora order—was likely based on the stripes on the thylacine's back, and had a key role in the cultural meanings attributed to the animal and how the settlers in Tasmania interacted with it. Far from a large "tyger," the marsupial grew to a maximum length of 130 cm, plus a tail of some 50 cm, with a shoulder height of about 60 cm (males were often slightly larger than females). At about 20–30 kg, the thylacine was considerably smaller than the *Panthera tigris* (which weighs up to over 300 kg), the Asian tiger that its colloquial name recalls.

As David Owen points out, "spiders and snakes induce a primal fear—and from that day in 1804 when Knopwood's escaped convicts saw a 'large tyger' in the bush, the island's people had been taught to fear and loathe a dangerous animal" (116). The ferociousness of the tiger was known to the European settlers of the early period from colonial endeavors in Asia and Africa: The thylacine was thus not only associated with an animal much larger and hungrier than itself, but its renaming also forged links with the colonial project. I will not go into details of the ensuing demise of the thylacine: It suffices to say that the government of the day considered the thylacine as a threat to agricultural practices, in particular sheep farming, which led to the introduction of a bounty system, and, later, as numbers dropped, the capture of specimens for zoos. By the time the species became officially protected in July 1936, only one remaining member of the species was known, namely, the "specimen" in the Hobart Zoo. Benjamin, the last officially recorded thylacine (actually a female), died only 45 days later.

The thylacine suffered, I believe, for being the Tasmanian "tiger": The animal was constructed as a vicious beast, in fact a

"native" vicious beast, in contrast to the civilized behavior of the new European inhabitants, both human and animal. Robert Paddle argues that

> while the origin for this "dread" may be found in popular perceptions of a threat (real or imagined) to colonial husbandry, such suggested fear and loathing of the species, once acknowledged, soon took on a life of its own. Popular perceptions of the thylacine became based on . . . the desire of the "civilised" city dweller to be shocked, horrified or frightened by the wild and primitive, accompanied by colonial and European attitudes – both rural and urban – of the Australian bush as "the enemy"[.] (29)

The thylacine, in its mystified and mythologized version of the Tasmanian Tiger, must thus be seen as a representative of the "native wild," the wilderness. Paddle's analysis of the story of the thylacine suggests that science is not separated from the workings of myth, traceable in the mistaken scientific classification and in the practices that resulted from misinformation regarding its behavior: The mythologization of science and scientific observations led to the thylacine's demise.

At the same time, it is also likely that it is the mythologization by the people that has led to attempts by science to clone it in a project undertaken by the Australian Museum (cf. also Owen 178–85; Leigh "Back from the Dead"). While the myth of the Tasmanian Tiger may have resulted in the thylacine's death, its mythical status has also meant that it is the focus of such a multimillion dollar project, instead of any number of species that also face, or have succumbed to, extinction. As David Owen suggests: "Alongside its positive allure and mystique as a tourism and quality-brand symbol, the loss of the thylacine glaringly symbolises wanton, careless destruction of the natural world" (25). The choice of the thylacine/Tasmanian Tiger as the focus of M's mission is thus highly symbolic. *The Hunter*, by focusing on this animal, draws on the myth surrounding the creature and also draws on an implicit understanding of the consequences of human actions on the environment, in particular on the consequences of colonial projects. Steve Himmer, in his article "Land of Heart's Desire: Inscribing the Australian Landscape," suggests that

> the hunter enters into a bloody, discomforting trinity with the hunted—human and animal, white and Aboriginal—and just as earlier arrivals to Australia renamed the landscape in order to rewrite history, M casts himself in the role of both colonizer and colonized. (49)

The Tasmanian Tiger does not only allude to discourses of extinction and DNA reconstruction. It also draws on a further discourse: Cryptozoology, the "science of hidden animals." In this sense, the Tasmanian Tiger is more like the Loch Ness Monster, the yeti, bigfoot, or Sasquatch than say the dodo. Cryptozoology refers to its "hidden animals" as *cryptids*, which are, as Chad Arment would have it, "an ethnoknown animal which may represent a new species or a species previously considered extinct" (9).[8] Like these other mysterious animals, the Tasmanian Tiger has a cultural presence that persists regardless of its physical presence. Numerous websites testify to the current day presence of the animal in Tasmania; photographs and videos continue to be uploaded to sites like www.tasmanian-tiger.com or www.youtube.com. Such sites provide visual clues attesting to the discourse that informed the blurry colored photographs on the covers of some of the editions.

The Tasmanian Tiger is furthermore omnipresent as an image or product for consumption in the form of tourist articles such as tea towels, plush toys, fridge magnets, and even iconic roadsigns. It is the name of an Australian Rules football team, it figures on the Tasmanian Coat of Arms, and it is used as an image on bottles of Tasmanian beer. The use of the animal in these contexts suggests a very contradictory image of Tasmania, associating it closely not only with wilderness (as it is also the logo for the tourist commission of Tasmania), but also with problems of extinction and colonization. Tasmanian Tiger is, finally, also the brand name of a Tatonka subsidiary that sells equipment for tactical applications, police operations, and general outdoor use—an association that correlates almost too well with the themes of exploitation and hunting explored in *The Hunter*.

The Tiger in the Wilderness

The symbol of the Tasmanian Tiger is in itself quite complex. Not only is it possible to interpret the Tasmanian Tiger simply as the thylacine—as the case is with the efforts to "reinvent" the animal using high-tech procedures involving DNA retrieved from preserved specimens—but also the thylacine as the tiger—which led, in final consequence, to the demise of the animal, as argued above. In addition to these two interpretations, it is necessary to consider the claims made to the tiger by the two main groups Julia Leigh includes in her novel to come to an understanding of how complex the animal and its representations are, and how closely related these in turn are to ideas of wilderness presented in the text.

The two groups Leigh pits against each other can roughly be described as townspeople (farmers and perhaps loggers), on the one hand, and conservationists or hippies, on the other. Their particular claims to the land and the repercussions this has for the construction of wilderness within the novel can be succinctly summarized by the dualism production/conservation, both forms of utilization. It is important to recognize before I go into any detail that these groups essentially arise from the same historical and cultural background: Anglo-Australians, post-settlers. Here we have two groups arising from one cultural heritage with diametrically opposed claims to the land. This testifies to the changing flows of meanings ascribed to space, or, in Doreen Massey's words, it suggests a "sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality" (*For Space* 9). This link also functions at another level, as, according to David Owen, "conservation issues remain highly emotive in Tasmania because there is seen to be a close correlation between one form of environmental extinction and another" (160).

It is this "contemporaneous plurality" that Giorgio Agamben emphasizes when he draws on Jakob von Uexküll to express the different and simultaneous views of the forest:

> There does not exist a forest as an objectively fixed environment: there exists a forest-for-the-park-ranger, a forest-for-the-hunter, a forest-for-the-botanist, a forest-for-the-wayfarer, a forest-for-the-nature-lover, a forest-for-the-carpenter, and finally a fable forest in which Little Red Riding Hood loses her way. (41)

The presence of two groups within the area to which M travels and that functions as his base for his ventures onto the plateau is foregrounded in the novel. As some critics have pointed out, this is established by rather basic means. Andrew Peek, for example, writing in the *Australian Book Review*, summarizes as follows: "*The Hunter*'s setting, in rural Tasmania, pits hippie and conservationist against backwoodsy yokels" (30). It becomes, in one particular scene, apparent that for this group of pub-goers, M is associated with Jarrah Armstrong by living in his family's house (cf. 63).[9] The Armstrongs are considered hippies by the townsfolk: M is a hunter, as the reader is well aware, and therefore anything but a hippie or conservationist, but he nevertheless neglects to correct this misunderstanding. This is important to recognize, as it is M's observations and commentary that we, as readers, are privy to, and the establishment of the two groups as diametrically opposed is also a function of this

narrative perspective. The hippies (or conservationists) are, as one can imagine, interested in protecting the land from "development": Their goal is conservation.[10] Allusions to this are present in the novel in the description of a poster in the Armstrong's kitchen (cf. 10) and also when the group arrives and rather vaguely mentions "an action out Tarkine way, where the Road to Nowhere is being put through. Yeah, someone knows someone out there, yeah, that's right" (106). This quote acts as a reference to the activist scene in the southwest of Tasmania, thus associating the visitors and the Armstrong household explicitly with the activist (or hippie) scene.

In fact, wilderness in Tasmania is historically closely linked to the green movement. "The Wilderness Society" has its roots in Tasmanian environmental protest, as does the Greens Australia Party, the first "Green" party in the world. Also, a large portion of the southwest of Tasmania is protected as the "Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area," making this area very explicitly marketed as wilderness. The group of hippies thus has a claim to the area based on their desire to protect it from logging (at least by association), which in turn rests on the construction of this area as "wilderness." The use of the term wilderness in this context is problematic as it has historically neglected the claims of indigenous peoples to the region by asserting that wilderness is pure, untouched by human agency, although the definition has been changed recently to "land unaltered by 'modern industrial civilisation and colonial society'" (Low 43). This claim, however, must be contrasted with a diametrically opposed claim, namely, that of townspeople, whom I take to be representative of farmers and loggers.

The area also has a strong identificatory function for those who rely on it for their livelihoods as farmers or loggers, but the symbolism of the area is vastly different. It is seen by the people of this group as a resource, a natural resource to be harnessed, specifically by themselves. Many of this group of farmers and loggers will have a historical connection to the area, which extends beyond that of the, often transient, "greenies." The attitude of this group toward nature is decidedly different from that of the conservationists, whom they are constructed against in the novel. The antagonism between the two groups is expressed most markedly in the use of the word "cunt" (63) in connection with the adjective greenie.

The tiger is most obviously present in the novel as a symbol for the loggers and farmers' wilderness at the butcher M visits in town: There, he sees that a "piece of rib-eye steak on display is pinned with a white plastic card reading 'Tassie Tiger—$50 000/kilo'" (40). The

exorbitant price reveals several things: It is so unrealistic that it is clearly marked as a joke; that it functions as a joke demonstrates its place securely within the world-view of its creator and recipients; it is given a monetary worth, and thus incorporated into the order of utilitarian attitudes toward nature; and it is dead, reinforcing not only its position in this order, but also its historical role as an animal that was shot (albeit not for meat). Its presence in the novel in this form is ambivalent because its meaning is bound to a number of inner contradictions: The tiger, as a symbol of the past, cannot exist, because the past is gone. The tiger, as a symbol of wilderness, must be other. The tiger, as food, is other (animal) but will become the same (i.e., incorporated [becoming the corpus, or body] by the process of eating). The tiger, as a priced commodity, is part of the capitalist order, but the high price reflects its mythical status, thus simultaneously placing it outside of this same order. The tiger, if it exists, demonstrates a continuation of past attitudes and, therefore, must be acknowledged or killed. The tiger cannot be killed because this would be repeating the past. And, of course, the Tasmanian Tiger also functions as a symbol for the conservation movement. In this way, the tiger is a symbol for wilderness for both groups.

Although these groups have diametrically opposed claims to the wilderness, it is necessary to note that they both have such claims. But there are two further groups that should be mentioned: Hunters and the Aborigines. As can be expected from a story told through the eyes of a third-person "reflector" character of M's profession, there is a decided emphasis on the role of hunters. Within the novel, the colonial timeframe is often associated with the history of the tiger being hunted: On his first trip up onto the plateau, M imagines "a hundred years ago the same ground would have been regularly used by men carrying up to seventy pounds of wallaby and possum pelts across their shoulders. Tiger pelts, too, or carcasses: once upon a time" (15). In fact, M imagines himself into a lineage of hunters throughout the novel:

> Already sixteen, yes sixteen Ice Ages had passed without dramatic loss of life. What made the last one different was a two-legged fearsome little pygmy, the human hunter: a testimony to cunning, to mind over matter. This thought brings M the kind of comfort and satisfaction another man might derive from leafing through a set of family photo albums. (31)

The presence of history is also evident a little later in the novel when information, which has evidently come from his dossier, is juxtaposed with this imagined *ersatz* genealogy (cf. 37).

An older sense of time, as well as an older form of Aboriginal knowledge, is also present in the story. For instance, on occasion, the environment is described in terms of long-term past as witnessed in descriptions such as that of a "small stand of thousand-year-old pencil pines, of a rich sombre green befitting their age" (56). This short description may go unnoticed, but it also functions to foreground the following passage:

> One day his attention is caught by a ring of blackened stones and he imagines they might have been laid by the local Aboriginal people, in the years before they, the full-bloods, were almost driven to extinction. He remembers reading that the government had once tried to make another island, De Witt, an Aboriginal sanctuary—anything to redress their embarrassing demise. It was a tiny and forbidding rock of a place, shunned by all. And, naturally, the experiment failed. Then in 1936, the year the last thylacine died in captivity at Mrs Mary Roberts's private Beaumaris Zoo, it was again suggested that De Witt Island could be put to use—any tigers to be rounded up and sent away.(57)

Thus, a link is made between the thylacine and the Tasmanian Aborigine, a link reinforced by Armstrong's son Bike's recitation of the *Palanna* myth. As David Quammen points out, the remains of Truganini who, according to widely accepted myth, was the last Tasmanian Aborigine

> were taken to mean something. They were taken to mean: *We the British-descended occupants and current possessors of Tasmania have a culpable past, as do many proud peoples. We have exterminated the race who lived here before us. This creature, Truganini, was the last of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Now they're extinct. A terrible thing, sigh, but it's done*. Her skeleton was precious because it embodied this convenient lie. (373, emphasis in original)

I believe that the thylacine functions in a similar manner. As long as the thylacine is dead, it is an acceptable part of Tasmanian (and, by extension, Australian, postcolonial) mythology, and it remains the Tasmanian Tiger. In this form, it serves as a symbol of a "terrible" past, inserting a necessary distance into the narrative of what it means to be a settler Tasmanian, or Australian.[11]

The Hunter and the Hunted: Gendered Roles, Gendered Spaces

Reviewers and critics demonstrate an inclination to critique M's masculinity, covertly aligning gender roles to his (morally unacceptable)

behavior, particularly those who are male. Richard Kerridge, for example, concludes that "conventional plot structures require forms of solution and closure that seem absurdly evasive when applied to ecological questions with their extremes of timescale and complexities of interdependency" (99). This conclusion explains why he focuses on M's masculinity and the plot structure of the novel, and not, for example, the narrative situation, which provides answers to some of the questions he is asking. One of the questions that arises in reviews (and also in the classroom, as my experience has proven) is "why did the thylacine in the novel have to die?" Kerridge answers this by juxtaposing M's "defensive masculinity" (98) with that of Jarrah Armstrong's, claiming that the latter poses an alternative, some kind of "lost possibility of a different sort of masculinity to M's" (98). Kerridge continues: "Had Jarrah found the tiger, it is likely that it would have been protected" (98). The juxtaposition of the two different types of masculinity represented by Jarrah and M can only be made speculatively. However, the fate of the two in the narrative framework of the novel is remarkable—Jarrah, the (sensitive) ecologist, dies in the wilderness, whereas M not only survives, but is also successful in his hunt.

An emphasis on M's profession is how Rob Nixon, writing for the *New York Times*, explains the character: He sees M "as an old-style frontiersman with a high-tech twist . . . , [who] patrols the Tasmanian backwoods with cold-eyed masculine intent" (www). Like trapping and woodsmanship, hunting is a profession that is associated with masculinity in Western cultures. There is a whole range of solitary, rural- or wilderness-based jobs that are closely associated with masculinity, including the mining, agricultural, fishery, and forestry industries, and, historically, many facets of pioneering. The figure of the solitary, marginal male in the bush has a long-reaching tradition in Anglo-Australian representations of masculinity to look back on, including the swagman[12] and the bushranger.[13] M—or more specifically, M's masculinity—can be read as part of this tradition, in addition to the more broadly spread tradition within wilderness writing outlined in the chapter introduction.

Sarah Rigby's review in the *Times Literary Supplement* stresses the solitary quality of M's character by associating this with his shifting identities: "He constantly assumes different identities," she writes, "alone on the plateau, for instance, he aims to lose ordinary human qualities and become a 'natural man'; but as the narrative progresses, the masks slip, and the novel becomes a study of isolation" (21). His self-designation as a natural man can be read against Margaret

Atwood's *Surfacing*. Where Atwood's protagonist, who is female, attempts to become more natural by abandoning language and relinquishing culture, Leigh's M emphasizes his ability to be in tune with his surroundings as a function of his hunter qualities. M is "the man who can see and hear and smell what other men cannot; the man of delicate touch and sinuous movement; the man who can find his way through the bush by day and night, and sit motionless through the long hours with his finger married to the trigger" (58). What is emphasized here is M's uniqueness and his capabilities as a hunter. The natural man is, as the second passage reveals, "ready, alert and unencumbered" (58), another way of saying that he is a good, unquestioning worker and emotionally unattached—traditional masculine qualities. As Tony Hughes-d'Aeth indicates, eco-fantasies that result from such romanticization "often revolve around the rather paradoxical idea that as humans become more natural they will also become more humane" (22). Given the final scenes of *The Hunter*, it is safe to say that this is a fantasy that is not indulged in the close of this novel.

As noted above, the tiger is constructed as female: In M's numerous imaginings of the tiger, the feminine pronoun is almost always used. The fact that the thylacine M kills at the close of the novel is female may be incidental or intentional; his imagined tiger is always-already female. In my reading, M's masculinity is a function of the deference and difference (i.e., *différance*) to the tiger. His imaginative energies, erotic energies even, focus, furthermore, on the tiger more than anything else: While he does dwell on the sexual (more than romantic) possibilities with Lucy Armstrong (cf. 18, 85–86), when these fantasies become a possibility after an evening of drinking wine, he thinks of the tiger rather than of Lucy (cf. 125–26). Any romance is clearly directed toward the tiger, as the following passage demonstrates:

> The flower reminds him of women, women in general, because women and flowers, for some reason, and he realises he doesn't know what reason, are one and the same thing. And this thinking of women, and flowers, and this walking with a feeling of comfort and certainty, emboldens in him a memory often neglected: that feeling of romance. Yes, he is romancing his prey. This thought rankles him a little, because at heart he knows he is only hunting, but for entertainment's sake he lets it run. (90)

He then continues to expand on this theme, using motives of roses and women, until he reprimands himself with "this nostalgia for

seduction is seductive itself. And it's delusory. The animal is no woman. He will not win it over with sweet words, wine and roses. Look around, there are no roses here" (90). Here, note the use of the third-person pronoun "it" instead of the "she" that we readers have become accustomed to: After romanticizing the tiger, M withdraws emotionally, reducing himself to a hunter again. The erotics of the "other," often aligned with the colonized woman, are transferred here onto an animal, an animal of mythical status.

The feminization of the tiger receives an added dimension in a different passage where M takes a fall. The passage is marked not only by its plot elements—M suffers an unexpected setback—but also by the change in narrative tense. In this passage, M's imagined tiger is confused with his mother in a delusory moment. That the tiger can be associated with M's primary feminine identificatory figure demonstrates the former's femininity and the powerful status she has in M's imaginative world. In his hallucination, "he thinks he sees the tiger, standing over in the shadows, studying him, and then he watches as she slouches towards him" (96), and contrary to his expectation that she might "guzzle at his throat" (96), he then "realises he must be dreaming, or hallucinating, and that something strange is going on. Now M hears his mother's voice, her gentle voice: 'Time to go now, time to go'" (97). In this passage, through M's imaginative merging of the tiger and his mother, the tiger assumes nurturing characteristics and thus symbolizes, even epitomizes, femininity. Also, by imagining the tiger and his mother together, M instills himself into the order of the tiger: Her genealogy becomes his own. This, again, makes for an interesting commentary on the status of the "other"—the woman becomes the colonized female animal. A further consequence of this reading is that femininity is aligned with nature, and thus the dualistic assumptions of ecofeminism—the privileging of male and culture over female and nature as Val Plumwood elucidates in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*—are upheld rather than overturned.

The personification of the tiger works to disturb the border between the human and the nonhuman, which in turn has repercussions for understandings of wilderness (as natural, in the sense of nonhuman, other). In the following passage, M asks the tiger questions of the past:

> Do you remember, tiger, when you were young and used to follow your mother down the escarpment onto the verdant plains? Do you remember how the sheep would mill around in clusters, doing nothing

> all day but fattening themselves? . . . Do you remember? You were the farmer's scourge, and your reputation went ahead of you[.] (47)

In asking the tiger questions such as these, he does not only personify her, but also constructs her somewhat as an equal, in particular, as a loner like himself.[14] In such passages, she functions pars pro toto for the entire species, as "the last of her kind" her role is thus extended beyond her (at this stage of the novel, only assumed) bodily presence. By therefore exceeding her body, the tiger thus blurs the barrier between life and death, and in being given a past, and as a conversational partner, she worries the distinctions between the human and the nonhuman. It is not, however, the actual thylacine that exceeds this dualism—as the end of the novel demonstrates, the thylacine is necessarily and entirely restricted to its body and is undoubtedly nonhuman—but the myth of the tiger, or the symbolic content of this myth.

Another challenge to the human/nonhuman dualism is posed by M's "shamanistic transformation" (Garrard 157). The following passage is foregrounded in the novel by a technique that resembles self-hypnosis that M utilizes throughout the novel in order to calm himself. Here, M transcends the barrier between himself and the tiger by imagining himself as a tiger:

> Lying there on the hard ground inside his tent he performs his favourite trick: he changes shape, swallows the beast. The eyes in his head are no longer his own, short thick fur runs along the back of his neck, and his spine grows thick and strong, right out of his back, out into a long stiff tail. He hangs his body off this strong spine, hollows out his belly, shrinks his gangly limbs. His arm is bent at the elbow, and a paw, not a hand, rests against his bony convex chest. (91)

In my reading, M is not using the technique to overcome his bodily functions (or fears) in any way, that is, to assert his mind (human) over his body (nonhuman animal); to the contrary, he is using his mind to in effect "blow his mind." As an animal, M imagines he can sleep without any thoughts. He can sleep the kind of sleep—devoid of emotions, beyond memories, and without scruples—that he requires in order to continue his task. Imagining himself thus into an animal, he in effect cancels out his imaginative process, becomes an "animal," and less "humane."

His identification with the animal and animals in general also extends to behavioral patterns. Not only does M singe grass to mask

his smell, he goes so far as to smear himself with excrement (cf. 30). He adopts "need-be" sleeping patterns (cf. 147), deciding also "that hunger is the only thing to keep him sharp" (ibid.), thus transforming his way of life to a subsistence-based day-to-day affair, temporarily at least. His determination knows no boundaries, and his logic is that to hunt an animal, he must be an animal: "when his imagination fails him, when he can't quite decide which pad to follow, which way to go, he drops his pack and gets down on his hands and knees and looks around. Sniffs, pulls cool air across his nasal membranes. Is still" (114). While in these passages his behavior seems to privilege animality over rationality, thus inverting the hierarchies of the dualism, it is vital to keep in mind that this is in its final consequence a technique employed to reach his final goal: To kill and "harvest" (148) the tiger.

Conclusion: Survival and Wilderness

Issues of survival and death are always going to be pressing for a hunter: M's mission is, of course, to ensure his own survival and the death of the thylacine. M's survival, unlike that of the thylacine, is not constructed in the terms of the novel as dependent on the will of others: It is his own will, and also his own equipment, which keeps him alive. M is strongly reliant on the equipment—tools and also food—that he brings into the wilderness with him, and acknowledges this, rather than suggesting the low- or non-tech approach that more romantic retreats of the into the wilderness narrative type often portray. This is most obvious in his extensive use of camping equipment and reconnaissance-like gadgets and information. M's predominant source of nutrition is the food he has brought with him: There is no "live off the land" sentiment in this text. He camps in a tent, isolating himself from the world with high-tech plastic equipment. He wears Polartech clothes. He relies on satellite photographs for orientation and has read a file on the thylacine provided to him by the elusive middleman from the even more ominous biotech company that has sent him on his journey. He uses night vision goggles to scan the landscape at night (cf. 51). All this equipment is to serve the dual purposes of keeping M alive and helping him hunt. The repercussion is, however, that M is separated from his environment. By using high-tech equipment to aid his mission, M is bringing civilization into the wilderness. He is, in this respect, in no way a natural man of the survivalist order, but, in this respect at least, not "postnatural" either. His survival depends on the advances of scientific technology as much as any natural instincts he might have.

Given the singularity of the thylacine, however, the conflict between survival and death becomes one between survival and extinction. The inclusion of species other than humans into this dualism—in this case, an animal—provides an alternative reading beyond the standard wilderness text's anthropocentric focus. The eye of a cat, the gaze of an animal on his nakedness, brings Jacques Derrida to query what it is that an animal is, but also how this boundary constitutes the human. The human is animal, but not quite animal—we can write the phrase nonhuman animal for clarification. John Tallmadge suggests that "the very idea of wilderness presumes the viewpoint of someone immersed in civilization, gazing far off. We may encounter wilderness 'out there,' but we normally think about it 'right here' – that is, in the city, where most of us live and work" ("A Matter of Scale" 240). Perhaps it is this "gazing far off" that the animal works to counteract. Perhaps survival needs a face before we can imagine its destiny. A panda, a polar bear, a tiger…An animal with eyes, with a gaze we can meet. Or not.

After the killing the tiger, M looks at her, noting "[s]he looks nothing like the creature he knew before. There is an impassable, unimaginable gulf between life and death" (164). It is this gulf that is central to the novel. The thylacine is dead, long live the Tasmanian Tiger: It is through the images of the hunter *as well as* the hunted that issues of wilderness are explored in Julia Leigh's novel. Reading the thylacine as a metaphor for wilderness, I must come to the conclusion that the reality of wilderness as untrammeled, undisturbed, and without human (economic and political) interests is dead, extinct. At the same time, wilderness continues to be extremely important as a myth, as an idea that has passed on and been passed on. As one of the hippies camping at the Armstrong residence suggests,[15] once a conception of nature goes beyond the individual, certain categories are no longer feasible:

> "Jarrah Armstrong had it right: energy and matter, that's what it's all about. No beginnings and no ends"
>
> "Bodies have an end, you fucking genius," says another.
>
> "Dust to dust, my fine friend, and dust is earth and earth is beautiful, and the rest, the real thing, that goes on too." (107)

In utilizing the wilderness writing, survival of species, both humans and others, comes to the fore. In post-wilderness narratives, the survival of wilderness as myth proffers itself for attention.

this is possibly based on a sense of "homophilia," which assumes mammals are closer to humans than fish and thus are (1) more likely to feel pain and (2) therefore suffer more greatly. Also, following Carol J. Adams and Marjorie Procter-Smith, part of how we respond ethically to animals may be linguistically informed. In their essay "Taking Life or 'Taking on Life'?, Adams and Procter-Smith argue that how we think about animals or meat is informed by the linguistic quality of the term "meat" as a class noun. Thought as a mass, the individuality of the animal is reduced, replaced by the nonidentical term meat. For "fish," the repercussions are large: Fish is both a singular and a mass term. Accordingly, it becomes difficult for the consumer/reader to identify with the fish, both due to its specific linguistic qualities and its perceived biological otherness.

5 Wilderness Values (ii): Protection and Exploitation in Julia Leigh's *The Hunter*

1. I use both "thylacine" and "Tasmanian Tiger" to reference the animal: The thylacine to indicate the animal as it exists in the habitat described in the text, whereas the term Tasmanian Tiger is used to reference the various mythological and cultural manifestations that exceed the presence of the animal itself.
2. Thematically, her second work, *Disquiet*, has little to do with her first beyond a sensation of loss and a feeling of distance (cf. Gee). Accordingly, my analysis of *The Hunter* does not incorporate a discussion of this novel.
3. Whether this vagueness of setting is an intentional strategy on behalf of the narrator is difficult to ascertain: Given the type of story we are dealing with—a mission to find something no one else is supposed to find—it is possible that this indeterminacy of setting might be intentional. The setting is thus given a broadly recognizable socio-historio-geographical context without being too specific. This is a strategy also employed by Tim Winton as discussed in the chapter on *Dirt Music*.
4. Scott Robert Brewer observes that "figuratively, the house stands on the littoral between nature and civilization . . .—a position further amplified by the farm's decline back into nature" (6). In doing so, Brewer accords the site of the house a similar function as I do; however, his contrast "nature and civilization" must be translated into "wilderness and civilization" (or "nature and culture") in order to fit the terms of my analysis.
5. This idea is explored in more depth in my article "Tracking the Tassie Tiger." See also Bartosch.
6. See also Edmund Burke's recollection of watching a London earthquake from a safe distance: He suggests that if there is sufficient distance between the sublime and the individual, a sensation of secret pleasure may even be evoked (cf. 223).

7. Although much less common, the thylacine is also referred to as the Tasmanian Wolf. For more on the repercussions of this name, see also Crane "Tracking the Tassie Tiger." For more information on the thylacine itself, see Owen's *Tasmanian Tiger: The Tragic Tale of How the World Lost Its Most Mysterious Predator* and Robert Paddle's *The Last Tasmanian Tiger: The History and Extinction of the Thylacine*.
8. The term ethnoknown is used by Arment to suggest animals that have had contact with humans, and whose contact with humans has been communicated.
9. The description of the pub's atmosphere parallels David Quammen's description of a Tasmanian tavern he visits on his own tiger-searching journey (cf. Quammen 298). There are a few further parallels between Quammen's account of his journey to Tasmania on the trail of the thylacine and Leigh's novel, for example, the explicit mentioning of "Tiger Creek."
10. Whether conservation is a laudable goal is an intriguing question I will not discuss here. Noninterventionist preservation, given the deep ecologist strain present at times in the ideas expressed by the "hippies," is possibly also part of this stance. Cf. also Peter Hay, who suggests that "to defend wilderness as having its own justification for being, in and of itself—without reference to its use-value to humans—required the asking of some fundamental questions, for the assumption that the natural world is to be reacted to primarily as human 'resource' is a key, and hitherto unquestioned axiom of western history and the economic and technological systems woven into that history" (17).
11. Andrew Peek dismisses this strategy, claiming that the "passing reference to 'full-blood' Aboriginals [sic] 'driven to extinction' in Tasmania, ironically placed in context of the rest of the novel, seems insensitive" (31). The references to Aboriginal presences and their past on Tasmania are sketchy and sparse; however, given the narrative point of view, this is not entirely surprising: M endeavors to present himself as a member of a tradition of white hunters.
12. The swagman—in other Englishes perhaps better known as a tramp—is a figure of the Depression; on the road and in the bush, looking for work, he tries to make the best of what comes his way. This iconic character stars in Australia's "unofficial" National Anthem, "Waltzing Matilda," which in turn is based on a poem by the well-known "bush-poet" A. B. (Banjo) Paterson.
13. The bushranger is essentially an outlaw, or a kind of "Western Highwayman," living a life of crime. Ned Kelly, Australia's most infamous bushranger, is the focus of a number of films and novels, including Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*.
14. This becomes most evident in the passage when M emphasizes the link by stressing the singularity of his own dream: "Do tigers dream? he wonders. And this tiger, reputedly the last of her kind, what does she dream of? The scent of a mate? Or does she have the same dream he has,

the only dream he has or, at least, the only dream that he ever remembers: the running dream[?]" (45)

15. Scott Brewer has also emphasized the importance of this quote, arguing that the immortals, as M comes to refer to the hippies, "entangle ecological metaphor with the actual environment: transformation is transferred to the environment; the environment, dissolved into energy and matter, is then itself transformed into a pliable metaphor. M's unspoken response to the immortals—'if everything is transformed then what is extinction?'— draws attention to the limits of this metaphorisation" (2).

6 WILDERNESS SURVIVAL: FUTURE NATURES IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE*

1. The biological term "splice" usually refers to changes at the RNA level. Splicing, within Atwood's novel, refers to a technique which seems to recollect some kind of "cutting and pasting" the genetic information of two or more species, thus creating a new species. Thus, "wolvog" = wolf + dog, "rakunk" = raccoon + skunk, "snat" = snake + rat.
2. The divisional structure is striking and is common, as Karin Höpker claims, to many science fiction scenarios dealing with population growth, and the specific form recollects the "corporate arcology [that] conflates postulated place and subject, and topos and agent" (143).
3. *Oryx and Crake* has been the subject of a large number of papers and conference presentations discussing ideas of (post)nature and (post) humanism, apocalypse, and survival. The thematic emphasis on issues of genetic manipulation and ecological morals within the novel has undoubtedly led to the proliferation of such interpretations: Such issues also frame my reading of the novel as wilderness writing.
4. Earl G. Ingersoll determines that the setting must be "the American South—Where would Atwood find a spot that's warm year-round in Canada?" (163): In doing so, he neglects to take the effects of climate change into account, which are addressed in the novel (cf. *Oryx and Crake* 51, 211, 285).
5. The Crakers are a species biologically engineered by the eponymous Crake (aka Glenn), based on *Homo sapiens sapiens*, but with a number of "new and improved" traits: These "improvements"—for example, in-built insect repellent, a digestive system capable of ingesting cellulose, and the removal of the "God-gene"—are those needs Crake deems important. Crake is also the mastermind behind the JUVE virus that wipes out human life in the catastrophic turning point of the novel.
6. The Paradice Dome is a high-security tract in a research laboratory where the Crakers were housed prior to the outbreak of the catastrophe. The name Paradice Dome suggests not only the Garden of Eden, but also, as pointed out by Martin Kuester at the GNEL Conference in

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